



Episode 4-20: Are Boundaries Biblical?

Resources:

Books/Articles

[What Does it Mean to Set Boundaries in a Relationship \(Council for Relationships\) - Jagkirpal Channa](#)

[Boundaries in Relationships - Ed Welch](#)

[Better Than Boundaries - Brenda Pauken](#)

[Relationships, A Mess Worth Making - Paul Tripp](#)

Podcast

[Loving Their Soul - Joyful Journey](#)

[The Hesed Love of God - Joyful Journey](#)

[Demonstrating Hesed Love - Joyful Journey](#)

[The Best Yes - Joyful Journey](#)

Website

[Masters of Arts in Biblical Counseling from FBS](#)

Handout

[Read Through the Scripture Challenge 2024](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Well, welcome back. This is Janet here with my trusty co host Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey friends.

Janet: And we're going to talk about a topic that I don't know if we're actually using the word anymore, but kind of like self esteem, we don't talk about it as much, but it's kind of become a given. So I don't know that you hear a lot about self esteem, but I do believe we operate out of it.



Jocelyn: Yeah, we just all function like it's a reality.

Janet: Yeah. And I think the concept of boundaries is moving that direction as well. So we're going to talk about that today. It's just very common when I'm working with women that I will hear things like, I need to learn how to set boundaries. I don't set boundaries well. And the reality is she may need a whole lot of help to know how to manage a very difficult relationship.

Jocelyn: Yeah, totally.

Janet: So, I need to listen and ask lots of questions, but right now I guess what I thought we could talk about is, are boundaries the answer?

Jocelyn: I'm glad we're asking this question because you're right. There are some. Situations that are very, very difficult to manage.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And the topic of boundaries seems like a way to help in that situation. And we don't want people to just be floundering around in misery.

Janet: Exactly. We want to help.

Jocelyn: Yeah, it needs to be addressed. So I'm glad we're talking about this.

Janet: Yeah. Is there a better way than setting boundaries or cancelling someone.

Jocelyn: I think there is a better way than cancelling people.

Janet: Okay, can we just agree on that to start with? Yes. So what I thought might be helpful is to first talk about where do we see boundaries in the Bible and the purpose for them, and then let's look at how it's being used today.

Jocelyn: That's exciting.

Janet: In today's culture, how would you say we hear that term used?

Jocelyn: I can only think about how I've heard it used in my experience in like the social services world and counseling like in the past. But I would have heard the topic of boundaries being used in relationships where you're like getting taken advantage of.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Or like someone is asking too much of you and you just basically have to say, okay, I need to set some boundaries in this situation. So I hear about it mostly in relationships and mostly in like the terms of defining what will and will not be allowed.

Janet: Yes. And when you say that, it's like, wow, there's a lot about that that makes sense.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I don't know that it's all biblical.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: But it does make sense.

Janet: So in researching for this, I read an article by the Council for Relationships. So this is not a Christian thing. This is a secular term.

Jocelyn: I've never even heard of this council before. I was like, wow, there's a council for relationships?

Janet: There's a council for relationships.

Jocelyn: Wow. That's cool.

Janet: And here was their article, the title of the article, what does it mean to set boundaries in a relationship? And I thought, well, that's exactly what I want to know is what do they mean by that?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And I do think that it accurately reflects the common thinking behind this term. And here's what the author says. So I want us to be thinking, there's helpful things in there. Are there things that should cause us to go hmm? He says, boundaries are the emotional, physical, and mental limits we set for ourselves in various aspects of our lives. Okay.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: We limit who can access our personal and emotional space when we set boundaries. They determine how much others can influence us, use of our time and energy, and affect our emotions. Healthy boundaries provide a sense of security. and autonomy. And I think that's interesting. Notice what they've just even said. Here is our goal is to provide a sense of security and autonomy. Okay. I think we should at least reflect on if that's the goal. Is that an appropriate goal?

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: It sounds like, well, who doesn't want to be secure? I need to think through autonomy, but okay. Should I pursue security? Well, maybe, but if so, where? And should I pursue autonomy? They're seeking to address a true problem, but I do think we have to say their solution is tied to their goal.

Jocelyn: Yeah, absolutely. Totally.

Janet: So if I were to ask you to define the crux of relationships, just think about that. What are relationships for? There's a whole lot of things we could say. What is necessary? Think about how you might begin to answer that. And while you're thinking about it, I want you to hear what this author said.

Jocelyn: Okay.

Janet: He said, in the complex dance of human relationships, boundaries take center stage.

Jocelyn: That seems pivotal. Wow.

Janet: They serve as the invisible but critical framework that defines the space between individuals. Boundaries are crucial for healthy connections, for personal wellbeing, and a balanced life. Every relationship needs them to foster safety and security. He goes on to say, boundaries are necessary to maintain identity, to show respect and understanding and to have healthy, thriving relationships. He ends it this way. Boundaries are the cornerstone of healthy relationships.

Jocelyn: I mean, that makes it sound so mandatory. Like, relationships must have clearly defined boundaries so that you know who you are and how to have well being and a balanced life. Like, that sounds very critical.

Janet: Yes. And I believe that many believe it is critical.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Especially when you hear that kind of like black and white terms, you would feel like I must go do this thing.

Janet: Yeah. And so I think that's very instructive from the author's perspective. Boundaries are-- his words-- center stage, critical, crucial, the cornerstone.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And then he says what his goal is, personal well being, balanced life, safety and security, maintaining identity. Well, the first thing I'm going to say is, I find it hard to believe boundaries can deliver all that.

Jocelyn: I was actually just thinking that.



Janet: That's amazing.

Jocelyn: Yeah, I was just thinking like, wow, boundaries, who knew that they could do so much?

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Because literally all boundaries are in that sense is like setting a limit. Who knew that limiting could do like

Janet: all those things

Jocelyn: connecting like and balance like that just doesn't make sense.

Janet: Right. So we need to know that that's the goals of the boundaries focus. And some people are listening are probably going, so you're telling me to just get taken advantage of. No, I'm not. I'm saying, is there a better way? Is it wise to look to boundaries for all of those things? First of all, do I need all of those things? And those things then there that maybe I do need, where do I find them? So contrasting that with at least stopping to look Okay, kind of put that on hold in the Bible Where do we see boundaries as actually a very interesting article by Ed Welch on this topic? Which I'd never seen an article on this but he walks us through how the concept of boundaries is in the Bible And he quotes this Old Testament scholar, Bruce Waltke. And Bruce Waltke says this, Boundaries are important in both the created and social orders. When everything keeps to its allotted place and does not transgress its limits, there is order and not chaos. So we do see boundaries in the Bible. And then he describes that. Welch describes how we see that throughout the Bible there are boundaries. There are boundaries in areas that our world doesn't want them to be, which is fascinating. We're all about boundaries. But in the Bible, there are boundaries between male and female. So that we will have order and not chaos. The Bible describes boundaries between water and land. Or there is chaos. Between light and darkness. We see all of those boundaries before sin. So, boundaries allowed things to be in their limited places and spaces in order for life to flourish. After sin, we now have additional boundaries. He says sin is a violation of a boundary that God has established.

Jocelyn: Yeah, that's very clarifying.

Janet: So there are boundaries that God has established. The article, I'm going to put it in our show notes. I highly recommend it. I am not going to spend our hour reading his article, but already I'm like, wow, the goals that God has for boundaries seem very different than the goals I just read.

Jocelyn: Yeah, definitely.

Janet: He says this, the image of boundaries describes life in a fallen world more than prescribes it.



Jocelyn: That's interesting.

Janet: So it just describes in a fallen world we need to have these boundaries. Before sin there were some boundaries. After sin we have additional boundaries. And sin is violating God's boundaries.

Jocelyn: Yeah, clearly.

Janet: So we see that in a fallen world, but it is not prescribing how to live. And then to think about it, it's fascinating. Jesus makes a habit of breaking down barriers, crossing cultural boundaries, not biblical boundaries,

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: But the boundaries that he came across that were not specifically in the Bible, his goal was frequently break them down.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: He was providing a way to live in unity and love. So I look at Jesus' focus. How do I break down cultural barriers so we live in unity and certainly live within God's boundaries? And then I look at the focus I read above. I hope we can begin to see they're actually antithetical. They're actually opposite each other.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Welch says it this way, simply put, we set boundaries because we feel violated. No matter how much we nuance the metaphor, it just doesn't capture the ethos of the New Testament, which is less concerned about personal violation and more interested in Persevering as we endure hardship for the sake of the gospel. So, how would you say, just from what we've already said, how is what we just read that Ed Welch is saying biblically, how is that different from the way we use it today?

Jocelyn: So the focus of boundaries is yourself and as I see it, keeping yourself safe.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And the focus of what you just talked about was really serving other people and following God. And especially like if you think about the sin as a violation of a boundary that God has established, well, that's just like that righteousness is the boundary that God established. And he says, keep your behavior and your desires inside of that boundary.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: So anything outside of that would be sin

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And a violation of what God said our life should look like. So I think it's really a dichotomy between who is your focus on serving. And who is your focus on Loving.

Janet: Excellent. So why do you think we're drawn to boundaries? Because I think there's some good reasons.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Yeah. I think the biggest reason that anyone that I know that would be talking about boundaries would be drawn to them is because of safety.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Like you hear people saying, you gotta set boundaries when someone's taking advantage of you.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Or When you're like time boundaries, like when you're not living a wise life, like you can't just say yes to everybody. Like you have to sleep actually.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: So most of all, I think it's a right to desire to do things in a safe way. Maybe applied. Not necessarily correctly.

Janet: And I think that's important because when I talk to someone and they say I need to set boundaries I don't need to say well, I'm not sure that's a biblical term. I need to ask what they're talking about.

Jocelyn: Right. I think we should assume that they are having an honorable motives.

Janet: Yeah, and I do think many times when we're in some of those especially those relationships We don't know what to do. Somebody is sucking the life out of us. We know we need to do something We know this is not sustainable. We know it's not right. And so this seems to be the answer And I think it's a real issue and we need to think through how do we help someone who's in selfish, domineering relationships.

Jocelyn: Yes, like how do you help the person who is potentially being taken advantage of

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Or who doesn't know how to at times say no to people's earnest requests.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Or demands.

Janet: So I appreciated Ed Welch saying this. The boundaries image suggests that the problem is coming from outside us. Indeed, problems, expectations, and demands can come at us. But scripture emphasizes those problems that come out of us. As such, first consider the motivation behind yes saying.

Jocelyn: That's an interesting way of saying that.

Janet: Isn't that interesting?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And I think, what if the other person really is selfish, so I think they're the problem. And he's saying, you first have to say, but why are you saying yes?

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: So think about that. If the problem is the other person, focusing on the boundaries is easy to do, and maybe A good idea.

Jocelyn: It might give you a solution. Yeah.

Janet: But is it possible the primary problem is inside me? And can I tell you, I think that's far more hopeful. Because

Jocelyn: Because you can't change the other person.

Janet: Yeah. I can't make them stop.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: And so I'm not saying I'm not, not, not saying, you're responsible for the selfish behavior of the person coming at you.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: You are totally not. But to quote Ed Welch, What is the motivation behind my yes saying? Why am I giving in to that?

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: And I think that's so much more helpful because God has answers for that. And I think many times-- I'll just use my own life. So we're not talking about other people-- when I am in one of those situations where I'm frustrated by somebody coming at me and what I would prefer to do is just set boundaries. Frequently in that moment, my goal is not how can I live out my God ordained purpose in a difficult relationship? How can I respond as Jesus would? And Jesus does not appease. So it wouldn't be that it wouldn't be that.

Jocelyn: It wouldn't be that. Yeah.

Janet: Instead, here's my thought. How do I get out of this unpleasant situation? I don't deserve this. I'm trying to serve and every good deed gets punished and here we are. It's totally not fair. So already I've got a wrong goal. So it's not surprising I end up in a wrong place.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So What do I need that's better than boundaries? I would suggest a word to think through is I need wisdom. I need wisdom, which is far more complex. It's certainly not as easy as setting a limit.

Jocelyn: No.

Janet: But I do believe we're called to supernatural wisdom and I know if I am a follower of Christ, I have the help of his spirit. I can actually learn to respond wisely.

Jocelyn: That's so cool.

Janet: Brenda Palkin, in another article I read said it this way, while boundaries is a one word seemingly all purpose answer, there is another approach that is more complex, nuanced and faithful to scripture. It's found in a trio of biblical concepts. She says it this way. It's limitations, love, and wisdom, which work together to bring greater holiness and health to our lives and relationships. I love that because I do want holiness and health.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I think sometimes because we're not thinking biblically holiness means I should always let them do this to me.

Jocelyn: Do everything that everyone needs all the time.

Janet: Yes. And it's not true.

Jocelyn: And even if they're not

Janet: That's unwise.



Jocelyn: Even if they're not necessarily trying to take advantage of you, like they're not nefarious.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: It's also not healthy to do everything for everyone because

Janet: I have limits

Jocelyn: you're limited.

Janet: And that's what she talks about. Her first one is limits.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And I think that's, again, it's more nuanced, it's complex, but it's the truth. And I think the world's answer is simple. You know how some people will say, the Bible just says, memorize this verse and it'll all get better. I would say the Bible is more nuanced. The Bible is more complex. I have to think.

Jocelyn: Yes. Definitely not a list of rules.

Janet: And the world's saying, easy, just set a boundary. So I think we have some work to do. And again, and you've heard us say this in other podcasts, if I'm going to be wise, the first thing I have to learn is my own heart.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I have to learn what I'm drawn to that's not Jesus that might be coming up against this other situation. It's hard enough to just be wise in a complex situation. I'm not going to say that's easy, but when you got a honking log hanging out of your eye because you're living for your idol, it's almost impossible.

Jocelyn: It will be impossible.

Janet: So then the answer is boundary. Because I don't know. So I have to know my own heart. Do I crave the approval of others? It's not my fault that somebody's coming at me being unreasonable. But if I crave the approval of others, it's going to destroy me.

Jocelyn: Yeah, you'll never say no, because you need them always to be happy with you.

Janet: Yeah. Am I living for my reputation? So now I fear what if they go tell the pastors and the pastors think that I'm not doing the right things?



Jocelyn: Or what if they think bad of me?

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Or they tell other people she's not a good person because she doesn't help me.

Janet: She was selfish.

Jocelyn: Because sometimes when you say no to people, unfortunately they may respond that way.

Janet: That's right. That could happen.

Jocelyn: It's possible.

Janet: Do I believe I'm entitled to comfort and ease? If so, I might just get really angry when somebody is pulling at me. Do I try to be the savior myself? Is that part of my identity?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I'm the need meeter.

Jocelyn: That's a hard one.

Janet: Because if that's part of my identity, I am like easy pickings, even for someone who's not doing it intentionally.

Jocelyn: Right. Because there's always needs.

Janet: Yes. Is my pride keeping me from humbly asking for help and saying, I feel like there's more and I can't do all this.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I was just in a meeting recently, you know, some counseling situations are just a lot. And when I was coming alongside another counselor who is in a situation, that's truly a lot. Well, when is it that you just need to say, I don't know what to do here. And that's not a character flaw. That's just a limit. So I have to ask that. I hope we can at least see how any of these, and I'm sure many more could impact how I view a selfish relationship. I cannot be wise in responding to a selfish relationship or even to a myriad of requests on my time that maybe not any of them individually are selfish, but I can't do them all.

Jocelyn: Right.



Janet: If I'm living for one of these other things, I can't be wise. And setting boundaries might just make me feel better. I just have to set a boundary.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: And now I don't have to deal with my heart.

Jocelyn: And it's a quicker solution, easier solution, a little more clear cut maybe.

Janet: And then I don't ever deal with my heart. And when I stand before Jesus and he says, why were you a yes sayer? I have no answers. And I have to remember that sometimes the extra pressures on me, whether they're manipulative or not, when they're coming at me, I need to recognize God's doing a thousand things. One of them is very possibly making me aware of what it's attaching to in my heart.

Jocelyn: Definitely. Yeah. And that's good to know. It's good for your heart to be revealed.

Janet: Yes. Oh, I need it. And then instead of resenting that it's all coming at me, I need to realize this is a part of God's good plan. So what else can I do? I got to do that. Okay, according to a Palkin I have to learn to live within my God ordained limits.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: She says this, we should expect to encounter trouble when we fight against the realities of human finitude and constantly ignore our bodily needs. Making time for sleep, exercise, relaxation and nourishment for body and soul stewards the gift of life.

Jocelyn: That's very well said.

Janet: Yes. She says limitations also mean that we will have to say no to some things that are good, but simply not sustainable.

Jocelyn: This really reminds me of the study that I did on the topic of burnout. Burnout is the nth degree of not sleeping, not exercising, not resting, not sabbathing, not feeding or watering yourself because you just feel like you have to do everything. But you can't live that way.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's not sustainable.

Janet: And God didn't ask you to.

Jocelyn: No.



Janet: That's you. And I have to see I'm living outside my limits.

Jocelyn: And what God allows you to do in the moment of a crisis is not what God describes that you should do on a regular basis.

Janet: Yes, life cannot be a crisis.

Jocelyn: It can't be.

Janet: But there are going to be crises. Absolutely. So I think if living within my limits is hard, Listen to how she brings us back to what I just said, what we just talked about with our hearts. She says this, if that proves hard to do, we may be using good works as a cover for people pleasing, a Messiah complex, an identity built on works or a faulty trust in God. It's necessary to take a rigorous look at our motivations. Instead of, because I know for me, There are certain people whose opinion matters to me. I battle people pleasing, but there are certain people whose opinions matter to me.

Jocelyn: Who matter a lot. Yeah.

Janet: So if they ask more of me than I believe I can do, I get mad at them because they've put me in a position where I have to say no to them.

Jocelyn: And you don't want to ever say no to them.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Well, whose issue is that?

Jocelyn: That's not their issue.

Janet: No.

Jocelyn: They don't know that. They don't know you're worshiping them.

Janet: I know. And I'm like, wow. So if it's hard to say no. I have to say, why is that? Sometimes it's that. Sometimes I like that she included a faulty trust in God. When I see someone's hurting and they're saying, I get these requests a lot. Can you counsel me? And I realize I can't do it and do it within the limits that I have. I feel a pull. Why? Because I love them.

Jocelyn: You want them to get your counsel.

Janet: Yes, I do love them. Could it be a people pleasing? Yes, I'm capable of all that.



Jocelyn: It's possible.

Janet: But there's also the, it's a real need. I really think I could help them. How do I just look at someone hurting and say, no, that's a faulty trust in God. I'm not the savior.

Jocelyn: I'm glad you're bringing that up because even in our best intentions, there's going to be times that we have to say, I see what you need and I cannot provide it, but I'm so confident in God that he will meet your needs. And I can refer you to someone else who could serve you, but it's God that's going to meet their needs.

Janet: Yes. So it can surface a faulty trust in God and we all need to grow. So if I see that, I don't need to wallow. And I just go, wow.

Jocelyn: Yeah, and all of us are faulty in our trust of God.

Janet: Oh my heavens.

Jocelyn: It's not like anyone has that perfect.

Janet: Yes. So what she's saying, even with our limits, just reminds us of why we have to do the heart work first. I won't be able to joyfully submit to the limits that God's given me if I have idols blinding me. I'm gonna be mad at the other person because they have surfaced a way I can't meet their need.

Jocelyn: Your inadequacies.

Janet: Or I'm going to just try to meet it anyway,

Jocelyn: But then you'll make somebody else mad.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Like you can't -- you literally just cannot do everything.

Janet: Yes. So if that's something that our listeners struggle with as well on a practical level, one thing that is helpful to me is have people in my life who understand my limits maybe better than I do and will ask me the hard questions. For me That is primarily my husband. I know that for some people the husband and wife both struggle to do too much and so then they need

Jocelyn: they're never gonna ask each other.

Janet: They're gonna need help outside. Just know your own. For me, my husband's very good at seeing my limits before I do. And What I have to learn is to see that that's loving and value it



instead of seeing it as something to chafe against. Because I want to do more. It's not that he doesn't want me to love people and love God,

Jocelyn: He wants you to not get crazy, Janet.

Janet: And he knows I'm going to fall apart. And he'll be the one.

Jocelyn: And he'll be the one cleaning up the mess.

Janet: Yes. Yes. Not that he's doing it selfishly, but

Jocelyn: He just knows.

Janet: He does have a skin in the game.

Jocelyn: He cares the most.

Janet: So know my heart, be learning it at least. And then, okay, I need to know my limits. So that I will live within them and I have to learn what is truly the way of love. We have done podcasts,

Jocelyn: multiple episodes on this. Yeah.

Janet: I can't remember all their titles.

Jocelyn: The Hesed love of God.

Janet: Loving their souls. Is that what we called it?

Jocelyn: Yep. Loving their soul

Janet: is the practical living out of that. So we have done sessions on that. So I'm not going to do a whole thing on that right here, but we need to apply those episodes right now. What does the other person need? What is best for their soul? Not what are they asking for?

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Not what are they demanding?

Jocelyn: Which are two very very different questions.

Janet: Yes, and this is the opposite of the stated goals of boundaries. Even though practically speaking there might be some similarities in how they look. Boundaries is motivated by I don't want this. Love is motivated by what's best for you.



Jocelyn: I'm actually glad that you brought that up because practically some of this does look the same.

Janet: It's gonna look very similar.

Jocelyn: Like I have to say no, but it's not because I've set a boundary. It's because it's not wise. Or it's not good for you or some other reason. But it might look similar, for completely different reasons.

Janet: Which I think is why if people here, if you're telling me not set boundaries, I guess it's, I just let people do whatever.

Jocelyn: Do everything for everyone.

Janet: No. I just need to be thinking. Which is why it's more nuanced. It's complex. It's not a boundary. It's what is within my limits that God gave me. And so I've got to look at my biblical priorities, and I'm in the process of rehashing all of that again right now. What is biblical love? And so the motive matters, even if it looks similarly. You know, I look at Matthew five and Luke six that tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Well, if you want black and white counsel from God, there it is. So I have to love, it's not a matter of they're behaving manipulatively to me, so I don't need to love them.

Jocelyn: I get to stop now. Yeah.

Janet: No. If you want to know God's heart for difficult, manipulative people. Here it is. Love your enemy. So I know I need to do that. Luke 10, we see the good Samaritan and how that Samaritan loved their cultural enemy. Ephesians four, bearing with one another, making every effort for unity. I love that. Not make every effort to make sure that I'm not taken advantage of.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Make every effort to be right. No, make every effort for unity. So, biblical love, I'm going to repeat what I've said in all the other podcasts on love, creates an environment that encourages righteousness.

Jocelyn: I'm glad you're defining that again, because learning the way of love in Matthew, you said, love your enemies. So what does that mean? You know, like, what does it mean to love your enemy? It means you create an environment that encouraged them to be righteous.

Janet: Yes. So if they're unrighteous. I'm not going to do that.

Jocelyn: You're not going get into that.



Janet: No, so the goal is to love their soul with eyes wide open. I'm not manipulated. I'm not fooled. I see it and I say, what does their soul need right now? And people are probably going, I don't know. Right. It takes wisdom. And the last thing you need is a log in your eye right now going, I cannot believe they're treating me this way.

Jocelyn: Yeah. True.

Janet: Or, well, what if I had, they need me, I need all that out so I can actually look at an already hard situation and say, what's loving to their soul? If they're behaving in ways that are treating me like I need to be God for them. Well, I can't do that, right? That's not loving their soul.

Jocelyn: Right. That would not be helpful for them.

Janet: I'm doing some work right now overseeing some counselors and one of them said, okay, this is going to be one of the phrases that we're going to be taking that we're probably going to hear a lot, crowd them to Christ, not me. So part of crowding them to Christ might mean not being so available. But it's not because I set a boundary, because I'm not going to deal with it.

Jocelyn: It's not because you're not dealing with that. Yeah.

Janet: It's because. I'm not going to be your God's substitute.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: What? So it's hard. It's nuanced. It takes wisdom. I can't give you a list.

Jocelyn: And to be honest, it's uncomfortable sometimes and uncomfortable is fine. It's just uncomfortable.

Janet: Yes. So it's going to take biblical wisdom, which is what brings together how do I live within my limits? How do I learn the way of love? It's all Biblical wisdom.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Which means you got to know the Bible. You need to know what Jesus says is right. And then you need to be creatively applying that right.

Janet: So when I'm in a hard situation like that, I may need counsel myself.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I was actually thinking that.

Janet: And that's totally fine.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: But the counsel is not, how do I get them to leave me alone? How do I make sure they don't whatever? The counsel is what does it look like right now? I know I have limits. I'm committed to loving their soul to my own hurt. But, I need wisdom. So I'm probably going to need the first act of wisdom is the humility to know when I need help. So it means I'm not going to go to someone who's going to go. Don't you let them.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I'm going to go to someone who's marked by biblical wisdom.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Not someone who doesn't want me to ever have to do a hard thing, but someone who's going to love my soul.

Jocelyn: As you help love their soul.

Janet: Yes. Yes. I've got a variety of articles that I'm going to link in our show notes, glean from their wisdom that talk about these issues. I think, you know, if this topic is causing any of us listening to be going, Oh my word, I just need a whole lot more. Start reading a whole lot more. That's okay. Gain wisdom. Seek counsel and even get counsel from biblical articles.

Jocelyn: And I think one of the things that's helpful about seeking counsel is that sometimes I will often, I don't see my own limitations. But other people can see them better and they share like, I notice that you struggle when it's like this or like when you have this on your plate, it tends to go this way. Like you're just blind. Sometimes you just don't know what you don't know. You're blind to the areas that are hard. And somebody looking in can see that so much more clearly when you, you're all invested and it's hard to see.

Janet: It's true. And sometimes it seems like I should be able to do more. Like it's me. What's wrong with me? I've sat with some precious women who are talking to me about things going on in their life and then they're struggling to deal with some things, and I will say I mean, you realize all the things going on in your life. This is a big deal. This is big. I've had more than one look at me and go, Oh, do you think? And I'm like, yeah. But when they've been kind of swimming in it, it's like, do you realize the fact that you're in constant excruciating pain? That's big. Do you realize the fact that this circumstantial big thing just happened in your life and you're trying to wrap your mind around it? That's big. So the fact that you maybe are finding you're more limited than you used to be and you can't do quite as much serving. I don't know that that equals you're lazy. It might equal these other things. You need time to deal with them and they can't see it when you're in it.



Jocelyn: And I think that's a helpful explanation to see how counsel can help you see how your limitations change over time because what you're available to do at one point of life, you will not be available at a later point and there's no judgment involved with that. It's just like clarity,

Janet: Know your limits. Yes.

Jocelyn: Clarity, like what you could do when you're 20 with zero kids, you won't be able to do with 40 with a failing mother and four kids.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's just different.

Janet: Or at 58 at my age, when you realize I seem to not multitask to the degree I did before as well. And I've said to my husband, I'm trying to figure out if I'm getting lazy in my thinking or I mean I get overwhelmed that I can't remember the things that I'm doing. And he said and in his perspective is I don't know that you realize what all you're doing. There's so much going on that you're losing things. I don't know that your capacity is less. I don't know. But we have to keep talking and going, either way, I think I need a little less right now because I'm not doing it well. I'm not remembering.

Jocelyn: And that counsel helps you to have that perspective.

Janet: Yes. From someone who I know isn't going to help me be lazy, but is also not intimidated by me and is just going to say, do you realize all this is going on in your life? So seeking counsel and seek Christ. And I think sometimes we forget that. We need to be running. Ask for his help. God, would you help me right now to pursue righteousness and love and not pursue my own protection and comfort? Would you help me right now? Which does not equal, allow me to be manipulated. That's not righteous.

Jocelyn: No. No.

Janet: But it's also harder than saying, I'm sorry, I have a boundary. Nobody's allowed to talk to me after two in the afternoon. How about. God, I need your help.

Jocelyn: And it's interesting because I think when you have set boundaries in the past, you, the plural you, all of us, when we have set boundaries in the past, you think that that protection is what's going to give you joy. But what really gives you joy is living God's way and sometimes living God's way,

Janet: Yes. Oh. that's such a good point.



Jocelyn: You know, sometimes living God's way means like I say no to this request because it's not good for you. And my discomfort at saying no to you actually will give me joy. Like I did something hard and God gives me joy when I obey. And sometimes it will be, I say yes to this crisis at 10 PM because that is what that person needs. And it's not unbiblical for us to say yes and we can serve in that way. So that kind of service will give me joy. What we need to be confident in is that living righteously. is what will give us joy, not protecting ourselves, giving us joy. It's such a difference. And it's, it's one of those supernatural parts of following Jesus. It doesn't make sense that when you live God's way, he will sustain you and he will give you joy, not your system working correctly.

Janet: That's such an excellent point. And thought about from the other direction, and then when I do set boundaries, the people that I know that are very rigid about setting their boundaries, I've not found them to be very joyful.

Jocelyn: Yeah, I agree.

Janet: It's not like it's even leading to joy that way.

Jocelyn: Yeah. It's not working.

Janet: Cause now it's like, no, no, no. Instead of, I may have to say no, but when I can say no with a quiet soul and know that I've honored the Lord, there is joy there.

Jocelyn: Especially, I would say your point is when someone has set boundaries because of safety, the pursuit of protection, and over time they become more and more and more self centered, and they don't realize it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: They are really a very kind of crusty person, like they're not overflowing with love. They're not overflowing with joy. And so that system just doesn't work. It doesn't produce what you're hoping it will produce.

Janet: Excellent. So if I'm going to seek Christ, the first thing I'm going to be doing is praying that I will see all of that. Help me see that your way is better. Help me to see that. I mean, think about it. Who gave you your finite limits? God did.

Jocelyn: God allowed that.

Janet: So it's not like he's going to ask you to live outside of them. He gave you those limits so you don't have to be afraid of if I just say, what do you want that he's going to ask me to do more than my limits that he gave me would allow. I can trust his heart. So I run to him and I scour his



word. I love just even looking at the life of Christ. See how he interacts with a variety of people. Every time he's thinking about what's best for their soul.

Jocelyn: Yeah. That's one reason why I think it's so important to read in the Gospels, like four different viewpoints on the same main character. How did Jesus interact with a variety of people? And the one that I'm especially thinking of is the one part of Jesus's life where he was serving all day long, healing, casting out demons All day long. I think it's Matthew 12 and then the next thing happens and the next thing happens and then they have to cross the lake and a storm happens like all these different things

Janet: when he's got to be physically exhausted

Jocelyn: exhausted. And Jesus didn't be like, Oh, I'm sorry, it's my bedtime. Like God equipped him to sacrificially serve all those people. And then at other times you can see that Jesus did not do things that people wanted him to do

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so it's really helpful to be able to read a wide variety of looks at Jesus and how he functioned and why he functioned. And I think it's also a good reason just to keep reading the Bible like we've been encouraging everyone to do this year. Like read the Bible. Because the scripture are going to teach you all sorts of true wise principles. And then we're going to see tons of different examples of how people put those principles into action in the scripture. So keep reading.

Janet: Yes. I know. And I love that because if they only looked at Matthew 12.

Jocelyn: They would get overwhelmed.

Janet: They would come away going, I should always do more. God will give me grace.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: God will give me grace. I don't need to sleep. I'm more than my body. I buffet my body and make it my slave. So I don't sleep. I don't eat. I just serve. But you're right. You look at all of it and you see many times he pursued rest. Now sometimes he pursued it, it didn't happen. And he trusted his father and served.

Jocelyn: He didn't get mad about it.

Janet: Right. But he pursued it. And then he would pursue it again. And then sometimes, so you're like, well, then what's the rule? There's not a rule. It's wisdom.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: It's what's best. And so I've got to search his word. I'm just thankful that Jesus didn't set boundaries and he bothered with me. Because I got to tell you, I didn't really give him anything. So it's not like he was with me for what he got out of it. You got me. So why don't we try this. I think with this in place, let's try to talk through one example. We're both counselors. I realize all of our listeners are not, but I bet you they can relate to this example.

Jocelyn: I think that people can cross apply this example. Like as I was thinking through this, I was thinking this applies to my children. It applies to my husband. It applies to my friends. Like there's lots of people that it applies to.

Janet: So let's imagine maybe you're counseling a woman. You could say discipling or a friend who texts frequently. Texts at inappropriate times and texts frequently with crises that really aren't crises. So that's your circumstance. So before we look at what is wise, loving, and what are my limits, what heart issues might surface in us that we're going to have to address before we're going to be able to be wise? What do you think?

Jocelyn: Oh, well, I love helping people.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so it's an honor when someone asks me to help them.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And so if I'm not careful, I can be sucked into like finding a little ego boost from that. Like, Oh, look at all the people that I'm able to help. Or look at this very complex crisis that I was able to speak to, or I know something about that. So I'm honored to be able to share. So it's really kind of like, by helping them, I'm really serving myself in some instances.

Janet: Yes. And I think that can be fed if you're hearing things like, you're the only one I trust. You're the only one who's ever actually listened to me. You're the only one who can help me. And so part of you is like, well, if I'm going to image Christ, I have to do it. But it's attaching to that's right. It's me and if I don't know that about my heart I'm gonna be more enslaved and not even know that it's there. So then I'm gonna be tempted to be the one. And then what's gonna happen over time? When I've been the one and instead of them changing and growing and being so grateful, it gets worse and worse. And now they're calling all the time. Now what?

Jocelyn: Yeah. You become their security blanket. You just get irritated because like, why can't they just leave me alone? Like, why do they need me for every problem that they have?

Janet: So now I'm bitter.



Jocelyn: Yeah. And it's like you developed it to become this way and now you're mad that it is this way.

Janet: Yes. And now what I'm tempted to do, I got to set boundaries.

Jocelyn: Or cut them off.

Janet: Yes. Which is part of my boundary.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Sorry, I'm done.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So what's going on here? Well, the first thing is, I didn't deal with my own idolatry. I want to be needed. So I'm not going to be able to see to love her well when I'm getting these inappropriate texts if what's driving me is something other than I love God and I want to love her soul toward him. If I start with trying to meet all the needs, then I'm going to get mad. I'm going to isolate myself from her and set boundaries. So first I got to know my own heart. Let's imagine that we've said, okay, I'm going to love to my own hurt. I'm going to be begging God. I'm going to be seeking counsel to say, what does it look like? How do I best love in this situation? So then I can start asking what limitations do I need to live within? Any ideas?

Jocelyn: Well, I'm not sure that this is what you're going for, but here's an idea is like I need to Have a good understanding of what truly defines a crisis.

Janet: Excellent.

Jocelyn: Because there really are crises that happen at 10 PM

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That I should get out of bed for. In my mind, like a crisis, and we might have to develop this out a little bit, but a crisis is like a very rare occurrence where someone's life is in jeopardy or a critical spiritual moment that does not otherwise happen. I'm thinking like of a death, like people are very open to the gospel around the time of death. And so I have to just say like my human limitations are valid. Like I do need sleep, but a crisis that is once in a lifetime or very rare is a situation that I probably would want to open up my sleeping schedule to serve.

Janet: Absolutely.

Jocelyn: But if it's like a frequent need and they have not listened to previous counsel.



Janet: So again, wisdom.

Jocelyn: It's right. I wouldn't be like, yes, I'm going to get up and take care of this issue. Like you already haven't done what the Bible says to do previously. So now, There's nothing I can do to make the situation better because you are not applying the scripture.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And so I don't know.

Janet: No, I think that's really wise. But what it tells me in those situations, I'm probably going to need outside counsel. Like what is loving here? Cause then here's what you start to think. Am I just being selfish that I'm not answering the phone

Jocelyn: Cause I could be.

Janet: for the fifth night in a row at midnight? Cause that's certainly possible.

Jocelyn: That could be. Yeah.

Janet: But for someone who's not in it to look at that and go. No, that's not even loving for you to be there. One question I will ask myself is, if I don't answer the phone, and we deal with it tomorrow, what would be different?

Jocelyn: I think that's hitting the whole

Janet: Is it a crisis?

Jocelyn: Define the crisis.

Janet: Yes. And that's because like, what would be different? Well, if somebody's bleeding by the side of the road, a lot would be different if I don't answer the phone.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: But if it's, I'm unhappy right now, and I'm just upset. What will be different tomorrow?

Jocelyn: And I'm even thinking about

Janet: So that can help me.

Jocelyn: I'm thinking about like suicidal friends like Even if someone is suicidal it does not need to be you that intervenes in that suicide.

Janet: Right.



Jocelyn: Because I have a lot of different situations where what is wise in that situation is for if they're saying it is imminent, then I say, then you must call the police.

Janet: Yes. Protect yourself.

Jocelyn: It's not me. It doesn't need to be me that goes over there.

Janet: And the suicide hotline is actually very good.

Jocelyn: Yeah, it is actually. They're very trained.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And so the limitations that I need to live within are like, what is wise and loving for all of the priority things in my life? Like, how does God say to handle this? How has my family asked me to be involved in situations like this or not involved? And then just like, what am I literally capable of doing?

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Like if I'm on the other side of the world, I cannot meet someone's needs.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And so I can refer them to someone else. I can tell them different ways to get their needs met, but I can't do it.

Janet: Right. So there's the really big, and then there's, it's just coming. Everybody's asking me, you'd be great serving here. You'd be great serving here. I do think the episode we did on our best yes, how to set priorities is important because what are some of my limits? Well, if I can't do everything, then do I know before God, what are his higher priorities for me? And I can't let a higher priority suffer because I'm doing a lower priority. So that'd be one of them. I need to have rest. So again, for me, having my husband for others, someone who can help you think about your limits. Because what will mess with your head is, am I being selfish? You certainly can be. But saying no does not equal selfish.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: So what are my limits here? So that I can be confident that I not only live within them, but within those limits that I give all I can.

Jocelyn: Another thing that helps me too is realizing that my no means another person's yes. Which is a good thing because Jesus tells us that we get joy from serving. And so if I am just doing all the serving, then I'm hoarding all of that joy to myself, basically. But if it's not wise for



me to do it, there is a whole church full of people that possibly could do it and to not get them involved would be to steal their joy from them.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so Jesus designed it to work that way.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: For me to work against it is stupid and prideful. And so limitations are sometimes in place because God wants everyone to be involved, not just a certain select few. And also like the limitations of my finiteness and my capacity to meet needs forces me to point them to Jesus, who is limitless, infinite, transcendent, omniscient, omnipotent, absolutely available to meet every single need every single time. And ultimately, he's the only one that can truly help anyone's situation. And so it's an honor to be able to say with humility, this is really a situation that Jesus is best capable of serving you with. And to say, they're asking for someone with limitless power, and that's not me.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: I am limited in my power.

Janet: Yes. And I think when we live within our limits, God gets the glory instead of us.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: When we try to do it all, well, look at her. She can serve everywhere instead of, I really can't. And maybe in this season, I can't even do what I used to do. And that's hard because I enjoyed it. Lament, all the things, but learning to live within my limits brings glory to God, because God is the only limitless one. So, thinking through what are my limits here? And then what is loving? What in this situation, somebody that's texting all the time at inappropriate times with crises that are not crises, so we've determined that in whatever way, what is loving her soul?

Jocelyn: I think one thing that's loving her soul is helping her to learn how to evaluate crisis. Because for someone who's crisis oriented, every problem throws them off and becomes the center of their life. And that's not a wise, good way to live.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so what we loving is to just not, not to accuse them, but to ask, do you know how to evaluate whether something rises to the level of crisis or whether this is just a standard problem? Another thing that you could ask is like, do you know how to schedule issues so that



they actually get dealt with. Like, do you know how to schedule it? Do you know how to follow through? Would it be good for you to have some accountability? Do you need a mentor? There's all sorts of ways that you could love in this specific situation, but it also might be loving for them to know, like you generally tend to serve your family by making supper and eating with them from five to seven. And so you generally won't be available from that time,

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Unless it's a true crisis. And if it was a true crisis, then here's how they could get a hold of you. Like you've told me that like I don't carry my phone around the house with me and so I know if it's a crisis, I actually need to call your phone twice, call, hang up, call again, and it will ring through like you'll listen to it.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: Like it's loving for them to know how I can serve them.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That's loving for me to communicate that. It's also loving for them to know how to grow. And so if this is a consistent problem, you talking about it with them would really be helpful to them.

Janet: Right. So if they want to grow, they'll appreciate that. If it is a habit of manipulation, they may not appreciate it, but it's still loving.

Jocelyn: And the clarity will be good.

Janet: Yes. So I may need to say, I'm concerned that this is what's happening. It might be the best way to love you is you can email things, but you may not text me anymore. And you go, Oh, again, case by case, if that's what's loving to them. But I don't set a boundary and not tell them why.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: What I do is say to them, here's my concern. And because I love you and I'm a really bad God and I want to crowd you to Christ, here's what we're going to try.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: We're going to do it this way. Again, it can look different ways, but my goal is if she's using me for something that should be God, how do I create an environment that encourages righteousness and not that?



Jocelyn: I think one thing that you just said is also very loving is just the fact that you're communicating.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: You're not just making a standard

Janet: Blocking.

Jocelyn: Yeah, you're not just making a standard and being like, I have a standard and you just don't get to know about it now.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: You know, like I've made this new rule for myself. That's totally unloving.

Janet: That's very selfish. It might protect me, but it's not loving her. Even if in the end it's still, you can't do this, but here's why. Because I'm not mad, but I want you to go to Christ.

Jocelyn: Another thing that I've done sometimes is just say, may I share an observation with you? And so sometimes we have patterns that we're not aware of.

Janet: Yeah. She may have no idea.

Jocelyn: She may have no idea. Never had that brought to her attention. So I generally ask upfront and say, can I share an observation that I've made? And then say like, I want to let you know that I've observed your interactions with me tend to go this way. You may not be aware of it, but I wanted you to know that this is how it feels. A habit is forming. And I'm not sure that this is a wise habit for us to continue. I don't think this is helpful communication or like, I'm not, you know, just, you can talk about the different concerns, whatever they are.

Janet: And so what you did was just answer even that very last one. What is wise? So we did what's going on in my heart. What are my limits? What is loving? What is wise? And I hope at least the listeners are saying, maybe I want more of a dip, but. Yes, I can actually think through it in these parameters and make wise decisions that are within the limits that God has given me because I don't have to try to be God. So just summarize, what do we see? That God's way is the way of love. And it's more complex and it's more nuanced than a boundary or a rule.

Jocelyn: And I think that's good yet hard to come to. That's a good conclusion to come to. It just means you're gonna actually have to really think hard.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: I think that one reason people gravitate toward legalism is that it's just much easier to have a rule for things.

Janet: Oh, totally.

Jocelyn: You just have to remember the 100 rules. But thinking in this way takes a lot of thought and applying it is uncomfortable. But it is generally much more concerned about the other person's well being and less about your own basically sanity or whatever your motivation would be.

Janet: Yeah, because in many ways boundaries are easier. But they are self focused.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: So God's way is to love to our own hurt, not to give in to manipulation, but even the hurt of having a hard conversation, to love to our own hurt with the goal of righteousness, upholding God's righteousness, providing an environment that makes it easy for the other person to be righteous as well. I can't make them be righteous, but I can sure behave righteously and encourage it. And that may lead to limiting time together. It may look the same, but the motivation is very different. So let's agree with God that his way is best and then do the hard work of loving like he does instead of setting up boundaries to protect ourselves.

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